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STATISTICAL AND CARTOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

Fifth Regional Cartographic Conference for the Americas

Report of the Secretary-General

1. The Economic and Social Council, in its decision 1989/116, took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the Fourth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for the Americas (E/1989/44 and Add.1), endorsed the recommendation made by the Conference to convene the Fifth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for the Americas in 1993, and requested the Secretary-General to take measures, where appropriate, to implement the other recommendations made by the Fourth Conference.

2. Accordingly, the Fifth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for the Americas was convened from 11 to 15 January 1993 at United Nations Headquarters, New York. At the opening session, the following agenda was adopted:

1. Opening of the Conference.

2. Election of the President.

3. Organizational matters:

   (a) Adoption of the Rules of Procedure;

   (b) Adoption of the agenda;

   (c) Election of officers other than the President;

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(d) Organization of work;

(e) Credentials of representatives to the Conference;

(f) Establishment of technical committees.

4. Country reports.

5. Review of the latest technology in cartographic data acquisition, manipulation, storage and presentation, with special emphasis on potential applications in developing countries:

(a) Map specifications;

(b) Conventional and satellite geodesy, including global positioning systems;

(c) Remote sensing for cartography;

(d) Topographic and large-scale surveying and mapping;

(e) Hydrographic surveying and nautical charting;

(f) Aeronautical charting;

(g) Cadastral surveying and mapping;

(h) Small-scale mapping, national and regional atlases;

(i) Thematic mapping of natural resources development and environment;

(j) Automatic cartography; development and application of digital cartographic databases, including digital terrain modelling;

(k) Land/geographic information systems;

(l) Map updating;

(m) Reproduction and printing.

6. Review of the latest developments relating to policies and management of national mapping and charting programmes:

(a) Managerial and technical aspects of national development programmes;

(b) Policies and practices concerning cartographic products distribution;

(c) Management and standardization of geographical names;

(d) Human resources development, education, training and research.

7. Technical assistance and transfer of appropriate and affordable technology.

8. Provisional agenda for the Sixth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for the Americas.

9. Adoption of the report of the Conference.

3. The Conference was attended by 100 representatives and observers from 34 countries, 1/ two specialized agencies, 2/ and eight intergovernmental and international scientific organizations. 3/ The Holy See attended as an observer.

4. The Conference elected the representative of Colombia, Ms. Myriam Ardila, to serve as President, and the representatives of Mexico, the United States of America and Canada to serve as first and second Vice-Presidents and Rapporteur, respectively.

5. Committee I, chaired by Trinidad and Tobago, dealt with cartographic data acquisition and supporting activities, including satellite geodesy and cartographic data acquisition by aircraft and space platforms.

6. Committee II, chaired by the International Cartographic Association, had on its agenda cartographic data manipulation.

7. Committee III, chaired by Guatemala, addressed cartographic data storage and presentation, digital databases and advanced databases for land information systems (LIS) and geographic information systems (GIS).

8. The Conference, recognizing the increasingly rapid developments in technology, recommended that, the Sixth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for the Americas be held in early 1997.

9. In addition to the technical presentations and deliberations on the agenda items, 11 draft resolutions were considered by the Conference and subsequently adopted. A summary of the most important is contained in the annex below.

10. The proceedings of the Conference are to be issued as United Nations publications, in two volumes - volume I, containing the report of the Conference and the resolutions adopted, and volume II, the technical papers submitted to the Conference.

Action recommended by the Council

11. The Economic and Social Council may wish:

(a) To endorse the recommendation that the Sixth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for the Americas be held in the first half of 1997;

(b) To request the Secretary-General to take measures, as appropriate, to implement the recommendations of the Fifth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for the Americas.

Notes

1/ Algeria, Argentina, Bahamas, Bahrain, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Finland, France, Germany, Guatemala, Honduras, Japan, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malawi, Mexico, Oman, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Romania, Russian Federation, Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay.

2/ International Civil Aviation Organization, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

3/ International Cartographic Association, International Federation of Surveyors, International Hydrographic Organization, Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, International Union for Surveys and Mapping, Organization of Islamic Capitals and Cities, Pan American Institute of Geography and History, World Conference of Mayors.

Annex

SUMMARY OF THE MOST IMPORTANT RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE FIFTH UNITED NATIONS REGIONAL CARTOGRAPHIC CONFERENCE FOR THE AMERICAS

1. The Conference noted the importance of technology transfer in the mapping sciences and recommended that the United Nations, together with the international scientific community, examine the feasibility of establishing an international advisory group available to developing nations wishing to acquire modern technologies in the mapping sciences. To achieve that goal, it was urged that a small meeting of all interested parties, including international scientific organizations active in the mapping sciences, be convened.

2. The Conference recognized the financial and communication problems facing many developing countries which should be participating fully in the regional cartographic conferences for the Americas. It recommended that the United Nations seek to provide early and regular advice to the developing countries of the region on forthcoming events so as to allow those countries to make budgetary provisions to attend the conferences. It also recommended that the United Nations seek sponsorship for attendance, where possible, of such countries at the regional conferences for the Americas and encourage papers to be submitted on their special problems, together with their country reports.

3. The Conference recognized the need to establish environmental information systems and to bring up to date global, regional and national geographical information for sustainable development, using geographic information system (GIS) technology. The surveying and mapping disciplines represented at the Conference could make fundamental contributions to the establishment of such systems, as could existing coordinating committees, such as the Advisory Committee to the World Bank on Environmental Information Systems for sub-Saharan Africa and the Observation du Sahel et de Sahara, consisting of members from France, Germany and the Organization Africaine de cartographie et de la teledetection. Therefore, the Conference recommended that effective ways to overcome the institutional, financial, educational and technical problems of introducing GIS systems into developing countries be devised and that nations be encouraged to prepare up-to-date digital geographical information data.

4. The Conference recognized the need of smaller nations in the region to develop geographic information systems (GIS and land information systems (LIS)). It recommended that available information on those systems be collected and disseminated through regional seminars.

5. The Conference noted that any constraint or impediment to the availability of land and geographical data and information to the conservation or development communities was in conflict with the clear aims and spirit of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. It therefore recommended that member States make available, without restriction of use, and at the least possible cost, all publicly funded land and geographical data sets, whenever the data could be released. It also recommended that self-teaching packages be produced, using microcomputer and multimedia technologies to promote the training of technicians and technologies in cartography and geo-information, preferably in the country of origin.

6. The Conference recognized the need for efficient data acquisition methods for mapping and geographic information systems (GIS), and noted that new technical possibilities of decreasing costs and increasing efficiency had been brought about by the recent availability of aerial triangulation by means of global positioning systems, minimizing the need for ground control points; image motion compensation aerial survey cameras, raising the attainable photographic resolution by at least a factor of two; and the use of digital technology in orthophotography. It recommended to developing countries the use of that technology, where appropriate, and also recommended that aerial survey specifications be adapted to reflect the technology, where appropriate.

7. The Conference recognized that there was need for training and cooperative assistance relating to mapping and charting within the Americas. Laval University (Canada), the International Maritime Organization, the International Hydrographic Organization and other organizations had underscored the scope of the need. Training courses and countries with advanced capabilities existed and were willing to be involved in technology transfer. Therefore, the Conference recommended that training and cooperative assistance activities be supported by the awarding of fellowships to developing country personnel and, in conjunction with technical organizations, by workshops pertaining to surveying and mapping.

8. The Conference recommended that the United Nations should continue to cooperate with scientific and professional organizations in the fields of surveying, mapping, GIS and cartography and continue to select the authors for background papers in collaboration with those organizations. It supported the provision, in collaboration with international organizations, of training courses in the application of modern technologies in the fields of surveying, mapping, GIS and of cartography to development issues.

9. The Conference recommended that the United Nations collaborate with all organizations dealing with gender issues relating to women in cartography so as to increase the participation of women in all fields of cartography.